

Title: For the Sake of Honor

Author: Jorland Brae

Jorland looked around the library on Paladin's Isle. No one. Not a soul.. and there looked to be no one that had visited here in weeks, perhaps months. All pieces of furniture, as well as books. were layered with dust. Small cobwebs were scattered in the corners of the large study. The Only signs of life were coming from his own body.

"What is happening?" the paladin said aloud to himself.

"Thou art still alive," replied a voice as the door on the far end of the study creaked open. "I thought as much."

The voice that sounded of dry leaves.. but it carried with it a great weight, as well as a tone of deep pain and sorrow.

None-the-less, Jorland reached for his hammer, suddenly realizing it was not there.

"Do not worry, Paladin Jorland," replied the voice, the source being an aged figure wearing a tan hooded robe that looked to have seen better days.

The figure's hands were partially bandaged, and also matched the quality of the robe. "We are in a place of sanctuary. I will not harm thee, and thine honour will not let thee too harm me."

"Paladin Jorland," repeated the well-matured Brae as he backed down from his defensive pose. "Quite a change from 'farmboy'.. State your business, Norus."

The decrepit figure let out what sounded like a sigh. "I am through fighting. I have regained enough sanity to realize what I had been doing these past three hundred years."

Jorland had an uneasy look to his face. "You have, have you?" he interrogated. "I am surprised you have come back to the place that you had forsaken."

"On the contrary, Paladin.." Norus retorted, "I have not forsaken my oath to Montor or to honour. I cherish them still, as if they were my own parents. I have never left those ideals."

"Then," Jorland pondered out loud, "how could you have done what have for so long? How-"

"Be easy, Paladin." intervened the withered and cloaked body. "Know that what

thou hast heard about
is not necessarily true.
Please.. sit."

Jorland reluctantly
followed Norus'
gesture and sat down
upon a dusty chair in
the study.

"The histories told of
four leaders: Norus,
Sudin, Vestar, and
Iestos.. and that they
were corrupt and
shifted loyalties to
Mondain, so the Order
banished them."

Jorland nodded, then
the aged figure
continued. "The truth
lies deeper than what
the books tell you. We
did not 'Shift
loyalties'. "Mondain
was a vengeful
wizard, especially
when it came to
protecting Minax. We
had her imprisoned in
Montor for crimes
against the Order
shortly before the
first Age of Darkness
began. Angered by
this, Mondain sent
Daemon assasins to
exterminate the
leaders- myself and
my three older
'brothers'. Though the
attempt failed, Minax
managed to free
herself from the
prison. With her
potent magic she
captured us.. and sent
us to Mondain's keep.
Infuriated, Mondain
wanted to end our lives
right there and then..
which was in fact our
wish. Minax though,
wanted us to live.. in
servitude of the man
we had sworn to
defeat."

"So you were enslaved by their magics.." stated Jorland.

"Thou art correct," the other answered. "We were bound to their bidding.. cursed. The only way to break the curse was to either end our lives, or to end the family lines of our apprentices. The apprentices were of course, the four known as Skara, Judah, James, and Ariyah. We were defeated by our apprentices, but Mondain would not let us die. He put us in a state of suspended animation until such time that the family lines would be reduced to one. Then we would be released unto the world again with our blackened hearts."

"..which has apparently happened?"

Norus grunted an acknowledgement.
"Yes, but our minds were so warped and twisted from the magic that we did not realize that killing our apprentices' family would also destroy us. That is, until Sudin found out first hand.."

Jorland went pale.
"Sudin? ..you mean, Arturius-"

"My apologies for his death," interjected Norus. "Though no amount of apologizing will bring him back. Sudin did not realize

what he had done until the deed was already complete. When he killed the Lightbringer, it freed him from the curse. However, his mind was still irrational.. and when as the knowledge of the past came back to him, it drove him over the edge, into complete madness. He returned to us.. and destroyed Iestos and Vestar.."

"..but he did not kill you.. Why?"

Norus shook his head. "He fell dead to the floor before he could reach me. His time was limited in this world after breaking the curse."

"..but what of you? Shouldn't you have died as well?"

The venerable body laughed. Not frightening and manical as he was before, but more gentle, like that of an old man. I should have.. But somehow, thou hast lived. Even though I have watched thee die from within my tortured mind.. which has allowed me to continue on in this old body. I cannot die unless I kill thee.. or if thou shalt kill me.. and to kill me, thou must have the gauntlets.. the 'Sunweilders'." From within the tattered robe, Norus pulled forth a pair of gold gauntlets and presented them to

Jorland, "Put these on.. and finish it."
Norus then pulled forth a rusted sword as Jorland donned the gauntlets. As the Paladin took up the offered sword, the former Northern Darkness bent to one knee.

"Norus.. can there be no other way?"

The hooded figure shook his head. "I do not wish to go on in this shell of a body. My life ended three hundred years ago.. Set me free.."

As Jorland raised the sword, he paused, "Norus.. When am I?"

Without looking up as if he knew what had happened, "Three years have passed since thine near-death in the north. Now for the sake of Honour.. set me free."

Sorrow filled Jorland's heart as he ended Norus' curse.